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Indonesia and East Timor: Arms and security transfers undermine human rights

Amnesty International recognises the legitimate role that governments have in maintaining security forces to quell violent dissent. In Indonesia, however, the military play a prominent role in quelling peaceful dissent and, in their handling of violent dissent, they have frequently committed serious human rights violations including torture, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

Indonesia's Armed Forces (ABRI) are focused primarily on combatting internal dissent rather than external threats. Their role is to monitor and suppress violent and peaceful dissent throughout Indonesia and East Timor. In order to do this, the Armed Forces are empowered to conduct arrests, interrogations and detentions. In the course of its operations, ABRI has committed unlawful killings, "disappearances" and torture and arbitrary arrests. There is a lack of transparency in the security forces' actions which is exacerbated by the fact that human rights monitors are denied access to particular areas of Indonesia and East Timor where soldiers are confronting violent opposition. The media is also restricted in its access to certain areas of Indonesia and East Timor.

The Armed Forces are currently engaged in putting down violent unrest in three areas - the territory of East Timor, the province of Aceh and Irian Jaya. Amnesty International continues to document human rights violations in all three areas. In East Timor, regular violations are committed by members of ABRI against alleged armed rebels and against peaceful pro-independence activists. Recent increased rebel activity in East Timor and Aceh raises fears that human rights violations will be a part of the military's response. Already there have been killings of alleged armed rebels in Aceh by Kopassus forces which warrant further investigation.

In addition, the level of impunity for members of the Armed Forces who commit violations remains high. There is no apparatus which consistently ensures that members of ABRI are held to account for violations of human rights. Confirmation of unlawful killings and other findings and recommendations of Indonesia's own National Commission for Human Rights are frequently ignored by the Government.

All of the factors outlined above contribute to a high potential for misuse of military and security equipment or training transferred to ABRI, placing a great responsibility on supplying countries to ensure that there are effective safeguards preventing such misuse for human rights violations. This is especially the case when the monitoring of the use of such equipment is severely hampered because of the restrictions on access for human rights investigators.

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Because of these factors and the continuing prominent role of the Indonesian Armed Forces in suppressing internal dissent, Amnesty International is calling for a halt to the transfer of a range of military and security equipment and training to Indonesia, including armoured personnel carriers, assault rifles and sub-machine guns, and lethal training for the special forces. The organization considers that serious questions must also be asked about transfers of other types of military, security and police equipment, technology and training to Indonesia to determine whether there is a risk that such equipment or training could be used to violate human rights and whether safeguards against such use will be effective.

A history of killings and "disappearances"

Extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" are among the recently documented human rights violations committed by the Armed Forces in Indonesia and East Timor. The majority of killings and "disappearances" which have taken place in recent years have not been fully or independently investigated and the perpetrators in most cases have not been held to account.

* In October 1996, Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission found that one of those killed during the raid of the Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* -PDI) office and the riots which followed was shot. The raid was carried out by a rival faction of the PDI and the security forces. The authorities have not further investigated the death. No one has been held to account.

* In September 1996, two men were shot and killed by the military as they drove through a road block between Baucau and Viqueque in East Timor. Eyewitnesses said that the men were unarmed and that they were civilians. An inquiry into their deaths was announced by Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission, but the results of the inquiry are not known.

* In April 1996, Paulo dos Reis was shot dead in Waitame, East Timor, by a soldier after he threw a stone at two Indonesian soldiers. A soldier was sentenced to eight months imprisonment for the death.

* In May 1995, 11 civilians were shot dead by the military in the village of Hoea in Irian Jaya. In 1996, four soldiers were tried and convicted of three of the deaths, but no-one has yet been held accountable for the remaining eight deaths.

* In November 1991, at least 100 and possibly as many as 270 people were killed when the Armed Forces opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Dili. There has yet to be an impartial and thorough investigation of the killings and the fate of those who "disappeared".

* Between 1989 and 1993, an estimated 2,000 unarmed civilians were killed by the Armed Forces in Aceh. Not one of these deaths has been investigated.

Military, security and police transfers leading to human rights violations

The Indonesian Government has failed to take the necessary steps to prevent members of the Indonesian Armed Forces from committing unlawful killings. The incidence of such violations is higher in areas where human rights monitors and the media are restricted in their access. Until steps are taken to make the Armed Forces properly accountable for human rights, it is likely that these serious violations will continue.

Recently, a number of governments have decided unilaterally to halt or discourage transfers of arms and security equipment to Indonesia, while other governments have authorized new transfers with little regard for the serious patterns of human rights violations in the country. Amnesty International is repeating its appeals to key arms trading partners of Indonesia to stop those military, security and police transfers which are likely to contribute to deliberate and arbitrary killings, "disappearances" and torture by the Indonesian security forces.

Transfer of machine guns and assault rifles

German designed sub-machine guns supplied in 1995 from the United Kingdom are being used by security forces in Indonesia. The UK Government has stated in answer to questions by MPs that it approved nine export licences for small arms to Indonesia over the period 1993-5, but has refused to reveal what types and quantities of arms have been included in these. Indonesian security forces also use assault rifles made in Indonesia under licence from a company in Belgium.

In January 1994, the US Government stated that it was halting the supply of small arms including rifles and crowd control equipment to Indonesia. In 1995 there were reports that the Indonesian authorities were trying to negotiate a contract with Australia to obtain an undisclosed number of Austrian-designed assault rifles.

Amnesty International considers that in the current situation in Indonesia foreign governments could impose no effective conditions or limits to ensure that assault rifles and machine guns are not used to commit killings of peaceful demonstrators or other unlawful killings or other serious human rights violations.

Training in marksmanship and in close quarter battle houses

It has been reported that foreign companies based in the United Kingdom are providing training to the Indonesian military unit, Kopassus, and possibly other units whose members have carried out deliberate and arbitrary killings, "disappearances" and other serious human rights violations. This training is said to include firearms marksmanship and counter-insurgency training in urban settings. It has also been reported that since 1994 the Australian government has exchanged military personnel with Indonesia for training and as part of the 1995 "Treaty on Maintaining Security" has encouraged close cooperation between Australian and Indonesian special forces.

Armed opposition groups operate in three areas, Irian Jaya, East Timor and Aceh. In the context of counter-insurgency operations, there is a history of extrajudicial executions by the security forces of alleged armed and unarmed opponents of the Indonesian Government. In Aceh between 1989 and 1993, 2,000 unarmed people were believed to have been killed by the security forces. Unarmed civilians have also been the victims of unlawful killings in recent years in Irian Jaya and in the territory of East Timor.

It is likely that marksmanship training will be used in the context of these counter-insurgency operations and will lead to further unlawful killings. In view of the exclusion from these areas of human rights monitors and the media, it will not be possible to adequately monitor the implementation of this training.

Amnesty International is also concerned that training in close quarter battle houses will be used in the context of counter-insurgency operations which may lead to human rights

violations. Assault raids have already been used against peaceful opponents of the government as seen, for example, in the raid against the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in July 1996. During the raid excessive force was used and there are allegations that individuals were killed. The authorities however prevented any attempts to ascertain whether any people had died during the raid or the extent of injuries.

Given the almost complete lack of accountability and human rights training of security forces in Indonesia, Amnesty International is calling for a cessation of lethal training for the Indonesian special forces.

Armoured combat vehicles (ACVs) and armoured personnel carriers (APCs)

In July 1996, following the use of APCs to suppress protest with excessive force in which at least three students were killed in Ujung Pandang in April 1996, the US government explicitly included APCs in its export ban on human rights grounds. Nevertheless, a UK company has, since 1994, been upgrading Indonesia's armoured patrol vehicles. Another UK firm was reported in January 1997 as having sold 286 patrol vehicles and at least 17 riot control vehicles to Indonesia. In April 1996 UK-supplied APCs were used to quell riots by students in Ujung Pandang in South Sulawesi in which at least three students were killed by the military. Scores more were injured. In addition, a French company was reported in February 1997 to be supplying an Indonesian army unit in Bandung with 18 armoured patrol vehicles fitted with 12.7mm and 7.63mm machine guns. Another French company is reportedly competing to sell many more wheeled APCs.

Amnesty International is opposed to the provision of such armoured vehicles to Indonesia at present because of the potential to use their mounted guns for political killings, to facilitate arbitrary arrests and torture, as well as to command and control such operations.

Water cannon and chemical dyes

Riot control vehicles supplied from the UK to Indonesia during 1994-5 were fitted with powerful water cannons designed to use both tear gas as well as pink dye. Both types of chemicals have been reportedly used by Indonesian security forces on street protestors.

It is known that such dye has been used to mark street protestors in Jakarta. On 23 May 1997, a photograph and report of a riot control vehicle using pink dye was published by a UK newspaper. The UK Government has stated that it is opposed to the use of such dye by the Indonesia authorities and agreed on 12 February 1997 to investigate reports of the misuse of the water cannon. Nevertheless, it has been reported to Amnesty International that further transfers of such water cannon to Indonesia from the UK are being considered.

Amnesty International believes that as long as arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment by the security forces are common in Indonesia, and until the UK Government has reported the results of its investigation into the misuse of water cannon to Parliament and can offer reasonable assurances that such transfers will not be misused again, such transfers should be stopped.

Surveillance equipment

In 1996 it was reported that the Indonesian security forces had acquired a sophisticated UK computer surveillance system which would enable them to monitor protestors as well as traffic

and criminal suspects. One UK company is currently reported to be coordinating a project to provide the Indonesian government with an integrated air, foot and road mounted system for the security forces to monitor demonstrations.

Amnesty International is opposed to the supply of this kind of computerised surveillance technology to the Indonesian authorities as long as the Indonesian security forces continue to carry out serious human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment.

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